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Letter dated 3 March 2008 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Ecuador to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

On instructions from my Government, I should like to provide an account of the facts in relation to Colombia's violation of Ecuador's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

In the early morning of Saturday, 1 March, military aircraft and army and police personnel from Colombia made incursions into Ecuadorian territory in the Province of Sucumbios, approximately 3 kilometres south of the Putumayo River. After clashing with members of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), they killed 17 people, including high-ranking leaders of that irregular Colombian group. In the context of these events, forces of the Colombian State entered the territory of Ecuador, took possession of a number of bodies and transported them back to Colombia. Investigations by Ecuadorian law enforcement established these facts on the basis of statements by local residents and data collected by Ecuadorian military units that reached the scene hours after these incidents had taken place. The Ecuadorian authorities received no advance notice of the Colombian operation and did not give permission for its conduct or for the entry of Colombian forces into Ecuadorian territory.

Ecuador is aware of the political, legal and social realities of the Colombian conflict. It deplores the severe effects which the conflict has had for decades on the society of this neighbouring country and does not support the violent methods used by irregular groups. In the framework of international law, the Ecuadorian State has always cooperated with the Colombian authorities in actions that are consistent with the two countries' laws and with human rights. Unfortunately, such bilateral cooperation was not in evidence in relation to the events described, which therefore constitute a violation of Ecuador's territorial integrity and legal framework.

The Government of Ecuador is deeply disappointed by the actions of the Colombian forces. At the same time, it rejects the presence of members of irregular Colombian groups in its territory. The Government of Ecuador reiterates its strong determination not to allow the nation's territory to be used by third parties for the conduct of military operations or as a base of operations in the context of the Colombian conflict. Ecuador will make use of all available security resources to prevent any recurrence of these circumstances. No military force, whether regular or irregular, may take action in Ecuadorian territory, and Ecuador, in accordance with its right to self-defence and security, will repel, capture and bring to justice any

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armed individuals who enter Ecuadorian territory or establish themselves therein for the purpose of carrying out illegal activities.

The Government of Ecuador once again calls for a peaceful solution to Colombia's internal conflict in the framework of that country's laws and in accordance with human rights and international humanitarian law. It trusts that the Colombian State and the irregular groups will find a way to reach a political settlement that will spare Colombian society the terrible consequences of violence. In the same vein, and for eminently humanitarian reasons, it expresses the fervent hope that the hostages held by irregular groups will be promptly released and that their personal integrity will be ensured. The Republic of Ecuador will always stand ready to contribute, to the best of its ability, towards humanitarian efforts to achieve peace and understanding in Colombia.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Rodrigo **Riofrío**
Ambassador
Chargé d'affaires a.i.